

LONGEVITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The women in our population live on an average about four years longer than men. This observation is based upon a life table for the general population in the United States for 1935, and it remains true according to a life table just completed for 1936, although for each sex separately there has been a slight recession. According to the figures for 1936, the average length of life for white males is 60.18 years and that for white females 64.36 years, as against corresponding figures of 60.72 years and 64.72 years in 1935. These facts are gathered from life tables for the general population of the United States computed in the Statistical Bureau of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which are shown in abridge form in Table 1 separately for total persons (white and colored) and for white persons by sex. Data relating to longevity since 1901 will be found in Table 2.

The last three columns of Table 1 show the mortality rates upon which the expectations of life are based. When comparison is made of the mortality of white males with that of white females, it is found that the advantage of the latter is not uniform through all ages of life. At birth, mortality among males is 28 per cent in excess of that among females; at age 3 the differential is only 11 per cent. At age 50 the excess for males is 48 per cent, but with advancing age the death rates of the two sexes tend to become more nearly equal.

On the basis of total persons, regardless of color or sex, it will be seen in Table 1 that the expectation of life, which starts with 60.81 years at birth, rises to a maximum of 63.13 years at age one. A half-century of life is still remaining to those who reach age 16. By the time age 34 is reached, the average person has as many years before him as behind him, and at age 46 the average citizen may still look forward to a quarter-century of life. Even for those who have attained the proverbial three score and ten, there still remain, on an average, nine and one-fourth years.

Although the average length of life for the general population in the United States during 1936 (60.81 years) fell by about one-half year below the record for longevity established in 1935, when a level of 61.37 years was reached, the slight recession is in no sense a cause for alarm. The general level of longevity for a number of years has been very high, and the figure for 1936 marks a gain of practically one and one-quarter years since 1930, the year of the last census. Compared with an average length of life of 49.24 years in 1901, the year for which the first official life table was published, the average length of life in 1936 establishes an improvement of 11.57 years in a period of thirty-five years. It will be observed from the data in Table 2 that the improvement in longevity among white females since the turn of the century has been greater than that among white males. Thus the average length of life for white females in 1936, namely, 64.36 years, shows a gain of 13.28 years as compared with that in 1901, namely, 51.08 years. In the case of males the figure for 1936, namely, 60.18 years, represents a gain of 11.95 years over that for 1901.

TABLE 1.—*Expectation of Life and Mortality Rate Per 1,000 at Specified Ages for Total Persons (White and Colored) and for White Persons by Sex, United States, 1936*

| Age | Expectation of Life, Years | | | Mortality Rate Per 1,000 | | |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Total Persons | White Males | White Females | Total Persons | White Males | White Females |
| 0 | 60.81 | 60.18 | 64.36 | 52.17 | 54.66 | 42.85 |
| 1 | 63.13 | 62.63 | 66.22 | 7.64 | 7.57 | 6.45 |
| 2 | 62.61 | 62.11 | 65.64 | 3.88 | 3.97 | 3.39 |
| 3 | 61.86 | 61.35 | 64.87 | 2.71 | 2.70 | 2.43 |
| 4 | 61.02 | 60.52 | 64.02 | 2.13 | 2.16 | 1.93 |
| 5 | 60.15 | 59.65 | 63.15 | 1.79 | 1.86 | 1.61 |
| 10 | 55.58 | 55.11 | 58.54 | 1.19 | 1.31 | .98 |
| 15 | 50.95 | 50.49 | 53.84 | 1.86 | 1.86 | 1.37 |
| 20 | 46.51 | 46.02 | 49.27 | 2.91 | 2.68 | 2.11 |
| 25 | 42.22 | 41.66 | 44.82 | 3.58 | 3.13 | 2.69 |
| 30 | 37.97 | 37.31 | 40.43 | 4.07 | 3.63 | 3.09 |
| 35 | 33.77 | 33.02 | 36.07 | 5.24 | 4.87 | 3.79 |
| 40 | 29.70 | 28.88 | 31.77 | 6.72 | 6.63 | 4.70 |
| 45 | 25.73 | 24.89 | 27.55 | 8.82 | 9.19 | 6.25 |
| 50 | 21.94 | 21.12 | 23.47 | 12.31 | 13.17 | 8.88 |
| 55 | 18.35 | 17.59 | 19.57 | 16.65 | 18.50 | 12.49 |
| 60 | 14.96 | 14.32 | 15.88 | 24.31 | 27.14 | 19.31 |
| 65 | 11.93 | 11.40 | 12.56 | 37.28 | 40.94 | 31.24 |
| 70 | 9.28 | 8.87 | 9.67 | 54.87 | 59.71 | 48.87 |
| 75 | 7.00 | 6.70 | 7.19 | 84.88 | 91.93 | 78.61 |
| 80 | 5.13 | 5.00 | 5.23 | 126.31 | 133.75 | 121.69 |
| 85 | 3.69 | 3.56 | 3.68 | 190.21 | 196.23 | 191.04 |
| 90 | 2.60 | 2.47 | 2.65 | 282.69 | 298.88 | 283.91 |

TABLE 2.—*Expectation of Life at Birth Among Total Persons (White and Colored) and Among White Persons by Sex, United States from 1901 to 1936*

| Year | Expectation of Life at Birth, Years | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Total Persons | White Males | White Females |
| *1936 | 60.81 | 60.18 | 64.36 |
| *1935 | 61.37 | 60.72 | 64.72 |
| *1934 | 60.79 | 60.24 | 64.18 |
| *1933 | 61.26 | 60.86 | 64.40 |
| †1932 | 61.07 | 60.69 | 64.38 |
| †1931 | 60.26 | 59.88 | 63.56 |
| ‡1929-1931 | 59.57§ | 59.31° | 62.83° |
| ¶1919-1920 | | 55.33 | 57.52 |
| ‡1910 | 51.49 | 50.23 | 53.62 |
| ‡1901 | 49.24 | 48.23 | 51.08 |

* Total United States.

† United States, excluding Texas.

‡ Original Death Registration States.

§ This figure relates to 1930 only for the United States, excluding Texas.

¶ Aggregate of twenty-seven states; not computed for total persons.

° United States, excluding Texas and South Dakota.

As is only to be expected, the figures in Table 2 give evidence that we can hardly expect, henceforth, as rapid gains in longevity as were experienced in the most remarkable period of the second and third decades of the present century. While in the first decade, 1901 to 1910, the increase in longevity was two years among white males and 2.54 years among white females, in the next decade, from 1910 to 1920, the remarkable gains of 5.10 and 3.90 years, respectively, were recorded. The ten-year period from 1920 to 1930 witnessed an even more marked improvement in longevity, namely, 3.98 years for white males and 5.31 years for white females. The first six years of the current decade have continued the advance, though at a reduced pace, the gains being less than one year for white males and about one and one-half years for white females. The fact is that in recent years, 1932 to 1936, the average length of life has been almost stationary, fluctuating between 60 and 61 years for white males and between 64 and 65 for white females.

Unless some altogether extraordinary developments should arise, we cannot reasonably expect the average length of life to go on improving indefinitely. The rate of any further advance must almost inevitably slacken as we approach an optimum obtainable under present health and living conditions. That we have not reached this optimum should be obvious when we consider that all the advantages of modern medical science are not yet as widely available as they can be made with proper organization. No doubt medical knowledge will continue to advance, and application will always lag a little behind discovery. It is the task of workers in public health to make the lag as short as possible and to make medical and public health practice as up to date and as nearly in unison with scientific knowledge as possible.—*Statistical Bulletin*, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

MEDICAL SOCIETY NOT AMENABLE TO TRUST LAW PROVISIONS

District of Columbia Group Takes Stand Against Action on Curtailment

Washington, September 5.—The Medical Society of the District of Columbia has told the Department of Justice that it does not consider itself amenable to the anti-trust laws, a violation of which had been charged against members of the society by the department in connection with the society's opposition to a hospitalization group.

Assistant Attorney-General Thurman Arnold replied to the society, stating the department's expectation that the medical society would "discontinue coercing qualified persons in the practice of their profession."

Anti-trust proceedings were brought on charges that members of the society were expelling, or threatening to expel, physicians employed by the Group Health Association, Inc., composed mostly of government employees who sought low-cost hospitalization.

George P. Hoover and William E. Leahy, attorneys for the society, wrote the department: "After careful examina-